

NOMINATION FOR THE EUGENE H. ROONEY, JR. AWARD

Program Title: Diversity Hiring Coalition of Maine
State: Maine
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Program Description

The Diversity Hiring Coalition of Maine (DHC) is a partnership of private and public sector employers providing leadership and developing resources to help Maine increase, support and retain racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace, to provide networking opportunities for member employers, and provide a resource for job seekers exploring career opportunities with Maine employers.

The DHC began as an informal group of employers meeting to discuss the difficulties experienced in locating, attracting and retaining racially and ethnically diverse job applicants. The group determined that one of the greatest barriers seemed to be Maine's distinction of being the "whitest state in the U.S.". This created a dual purpose for the DHC – to market Maine as a place to live in addition to marketing members as attractive employers. During its first year in existence, the DHC sent representatives to the NAACP Job Fair and National Convention in Baltimore, MD, returning with 275 resumes. Governor Angus King sent a letter to each person who had expressed an interest in Maine. This early effort resulted in several placements with members employers.

The DHC has also worked actively to increase its visibility within the minority community through such efforts as co-sponsoring a gubernatorial debate on the issues of concern to people of color and staffing a booth at a recent rally of 5000+ to support the Somali community in Lewiston, Maine. The DHC maintains its own website (www.diversityjobsmaine.org) and has recently partnered with JobsInME.com to have the DHC featured on its site as well as a link from the DHC to JobsInME.com. The DHC is currently developing membership criteria and a cost structure to enable more employers to participate and utilize the resources provided.

While the DHC is still in its development stage, it has accomplished a great deal for its member employers. Through resume sharing, members have successfully placed diverse job seekers as well as receiving assistance in placing partners of employees recruited from outside Maine.

- 1. Provide a brief description of this program.** The Diversity Hiring Coalition of Maine (DHC) is a partnership of private and public sector employers providing leadership and developing resources to help Maine increase, support and retain racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace, to provide networking opportunities for member employers, and provide a resource for job seekers exploring career opportunities with Maine employers.
 - 2. How long has this program been operational?** This program has been operational since February 2000.
 - 3. Why was this program created?** This program was created when several employers, including Maine State Government, recognized the need to explore ways to overcome the barriers they were encountering in reaching, attracting and retaining people of color as employees. Despite its ranking by the Children's Rights Council as the #1 State to raise a family, Maine was also billed as the "whitest State in the U.S. and was not seen as an attractive alternative by many people of color. At the same time, it was becoming apparent that if Maine did not take steps to increase its population, and in particular its diversity, it would experience a severe worker shortage.
 - 4. Why is this program a new and creative method?** The partnering of private and public sector employers to achieve a common goal is, in itself, unique. In this partnership, there was an early recognition of the common issues and of the potential for each entity to contribute something critical to the overall success of the program. The Governor's personal support of the program was essential to creating trust within the private sector members, and the name recognition of
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some of the larger members such as MBNA and L.L. Bean helped to attract new members as well as job seekers.

- 5. What was the program's start up costs?** This is also one of the unique features of the DHC. Member employers have contributed what has been necessary to achieve its goals without a dues structure or other source of income. When the DHC sent representatives to the NAACP Job Fair in 2000, the State contributed a recruiting booth from the Maine Bureau of Tourism, members donated a variety of "give-aways" as well as information regarding available jobs, and several members sent representatives. When it was determined that DHC needed its own display booth, Maine Medical Center donated the cost of the design and printing of the DHC logo and other members contributed such things as a banner, display board, pictures, etc. More recently, Maine State government paid for the design and first year maintenance of the DHC website. From 2000 to the present time, the DHC has operated in this manner. It is currently developing membership criteria and a dues/fee structure that will enable it to add new members and achieve its goals more effectively.
 - 6. What are the program's operational costs?** This is difficult to determine since each member employer pays its own costs associated with membership (travel, phone, printing, etc). The total cost of items donated directly to the DHC such as display booth, logo, website costs is approximately \$8,000. By July 2003 it is expected that the DHC will have its own budget with income from dues and advertising.
 - 7. How is the program funded?** See above.
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- 8. Did this program originate in your state?** Yes.
- 9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states?** No
- 10. How do you measure the success of this program?** While one obvious measure of success is the increased number of employment applications from people of color, what Maine and all member employers have gained in good will, interest in relocating to Maine from people of color, increased visibility and education in the issues affecting people of color in Maine is immeasurable. Each one of the employer member representatives has both a personal and professional commitment to the success of the DHC. Monthly meeting attendance is between 80 and 100% and sub-committee participation is 100%. The Diversity Hiring Coalition of Maine was awarded the Area I Diversity Award for the northeast region by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) at its annual meeting in 2002. The DHC also made a presentation and staffed a booth at the Maine SHRM conference during which numerous Maine employers expressed an interest in joining the DHC.
- 11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?** Since its informal beginnings in early 2000, the DHC has increased its membership to the current number of 18 employers, including many of Maine's largest employers. The DHC is currently working on a formal operational structure as well as membership criteria and dues/fee structure. By the Spring of 2003 this will be complete and new members will be invited to join. The DHC website is being professionally designed and maintained and a formal partnership with JobsInME.com has been established to allow job seekers to link directly to the
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DHC site from JobsInME.com and vice versa. It is anticipated that this will significantly increase the number of minority job seekers accessing the DHC website. In order to provide a structure that would allow fund-raising as well as grant applications, the DHC became an Affiliate of the Maine State Council of SHRM in January 2003. Beyond these external changes, the DHC has matured as a group with a common vision and a willingness to relinquish individual accomplishment for the achievement of that common vision.
